

21

EASTERN EUROPEAN INTELLIGENCER

25X1

29 January 1968

Soviets Reportedly Urge Polish Response to FRG

During his early December visit to Poland, Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko encouraged the Poles to take the initiative toward the German problem, according to the Yugoslav deputy chief of mission in Warsaw. Gromyko reportedly complained that the West Germans had taken the initiative in the absence of a more active policy on the part of Eastern Europe, especially Poland.

The Yugoslav also said that Hungarian Deputy Foreign Minister Erdelyi's visit to Poland last week concerned mainly the German question, and that Polish Deputy Foreign Minister Naszkowski, with whom Erdelyi held talks, would shortly visit Prague to continue consultations on this issue.

In a recent conversation with a US Embassy officer, the Polish party daily's German affairs specialist, Podkowinski, made the point that Bonn need not "formally" recognize East Germany or the Oder-Niesse border in order to "break the log-jam" in Polish-West German relations. He claimed that some kind of expression from Bonn indicating de facto recognition would be sufficient.

COMMENT: There is no firm information on what line Gromyko took on Germany during his Polish visit. It is likely, however, that the Soviets are concerned with the negative rigidity of the Polish (and East German) position. At the same time, the Poles last December showed marked nervousness at signs of an incipient Soviet-West German dialogue.

If Podkowinski's views are shared by the Polish leadership, this would indicate a reversion to the softer, private Polish position of late 1966, possibly as a result of Soviet urgings.

East Germans to Unveil Constitution on 31 January

25X1

a draft version of the new GDR constitution will be presented to the Volkskammer for discussion on 31 January.

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25X1

-2-

The SED Central Committee plenum, which will meet on 29-30 January, will also discuss the constitution. Party boss Walter Ulbricht plans to make what will probably be the major speech on the constitution, probably during the Volkskammer session.

25X1

COMMENT: Ulbricht called for a new constitution on 1 December, and a constitutional committee, headed by him, was established on that date. Based on what Ulbricht said then, the theme of the new constitution should be similar to the slogan proclaimed daily by the SED, "Everything for our Socialist Fatherland, Nothing for Imperialist West Germany."

Zhivkov's Cuban Trip Postponed

Bulgaria's official party-government delegation which was due in Havana on 28 January has been postponed due to the "illness" of Bulgarian party and government leader Todor Zhivkov, according to Cuban and Bulgarian information media. The announcement did not set a new date for the trip, but the Canadian embassy informs us that Zhivkov's plane is now scheduled to pass through Gander on 30 January.

COMMENT: The Cuban leadership shakeup, rather than Zhivkov's health, is probably the main reason behind the delay.

New Polish Ambassador Arrives in Moscow

Newly appointed Polish Ambassador Jan Ptasinski arrived in Moscow on 25 January. He was greeted at the Byelorussian railway station by the head of the fourth department of the Soviet foreign ministry. E. Gromov, and by "other personalities."

COMMENT: Ptasinski's appointment, announced on 17 December, was generally interpreted as a gain for the Polish party's hardline "partisan" faction led by Interior Minister

25X1

-3-

Moczar. Although there is no ready explanation for the ridiculously low-level reception accorded him on his arrival, it is possible that this is Moscow's way of demonstrating its lack of regard for Moczar's group, as well as of indicating the degree of Ptasinski's future importance as a channel between Poland and the USSR. [REDACTED]

25X1

Hungarian Haggles Over Conference Fine Points

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The question of the binding nature of decisions to be reached at the Budapest consultative meeting has caused some disagreement in the Hungarian party. On 24 December Premier Jeno Fock advanced the theory in the party daily that the leadership of individual parties would not be bound by the meeting's decisions, but could apply them according to the peculiarities of their respective situations. In what amounts to a rebuttal printed in the Popular Front weekly on 31 December, Istvan Darvasi, the acting chief of the party's agit-prop committee, insisted that parties which participate in forming common positions and voluntarily sign the resulting resolutions will be without exception bound to act accordingly.

25X1

COMMENT: Although there is little chance that the Budapest meeting will produce any but the lowest common denominator declaration, the question of the binding nature of such a declaration is troubling many parties in addition to the Hungarian.

25X1

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